

## BIG DADDY: "SGT. PEPPERS" - Selected Album Reviews -



### BIG DADDY

#### Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

RHINO R2 70371 (37 min)

**Performance: Like, wow!**

**Recording: Splendid**

It was twenty-five years ago today that Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play—but he never taught them to play like *this*. In an inspired move, Big Daddy—a greaser-rock group that puts a Fifties spin on contemporary hits—has rerecorded the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" in its entirety. The result is the novelty album of the year, if not the last twenty-five years. It doesn't so much deflate the Beatles' pretensions ("Sgt. Pepper" was more ambitious than pretentious) as mock the excessive praise of the album by scribes, seers, and hypemongers who saw in it the Second Coming. After a quarter century of brainy analysis, why not have fun with the darn thing?

Only a Blue Meanie could suppress a giggle hearing *With a Little Help from My Friends* sung in a letter-perfect Johnny Mathis croon as if it were *Chances Are*, or *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* done as a piano-pounding raver the way Jerry Lee Lewis might have cut it, with the band chanting "shake it, baby, shake it" in the background. Other highlights: *Within You Without You* presented as a beat-generation poetry reading, complete with bongos and free-form flute, and *A Day in the Life* reborn as a hiccuping Buddy Holly tribute. A splendid time is guaranteed for all. Don't miss it. *P.P.*

STEREO REVIEW SEPTEMBER 1992

**STEREO REVIEW – 9/92**

(See other pages for additional Big Daddy album reviews)



**BIG DADDY: "SGT. PEPPERS"**  
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**E-8** Tuesday, July 14, 1992  
The Kansas City Star

**Arts & Entertainment**

# Benefiting from the being of the Beatles

**'Pepper' anniversary brings us books, albums. And one is actually fun.**

Four out of five wisecrack rock fans agree that most new books and albums devoted to the Beatles probably aren't worth more than a glance.

So much recycled Beatles lore and music has been pitched to the public through the years that trying to extract a new nugget from the Beatles gold mine can make one appear the foolish idolizer.

That doesn't stop sincerely enthusiastic efforts, including those this summer marking the 25th anniversary of the release of the most famous record album ever made, the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band."

You were expecting "Andy Williams Greatest Hits"?

Once again, the commercial time is ripe for blowing up the Beatles' balloon to see how it will fly. Barely getting off the ground is a silly tribute album that ultimately cheapens the music it aims to honor. Faring better is a well-intended book, co-written by a Kansas Citian, that focuses on the Beatles' psychedelic period. Best of all by far is a well-crafted and funny parody of "Sgt. Pepper," complete with mimicking album art, that fans will find hard to resist.

Here's a closer look:

■ K-Tel's "Hooked on a Beatles Tribute" is Fab Four fast food featuring quickie versions of 32 Beatles songs recorded by an anonymous sound-alike group called **Dr. Fink and the Mystery Band**. Designed for listeners with the shortest of attention spans, no song here is allowed to last even halfway through before it segues to the next.

Although perhaps suitable as a party disc, the technological accomplishment is overshadowed



Big Daddy's "Sgt. Pepper's" imbues 13 classic cuts with imaginatively crafted echoes of the past that musically entertain as they make you laugh.

by the robotic results. This is a tribute that may momentarily capture the gist of Beatles music — the lyrics, rhythms and melodies — but doesn't come close to doing it justice. It's truly a *Reader's Digest* approach that, after the initial frustration fades, will have you dozing before you know it.

■ *The Colour of Your Dreams* is a book by **Stuart Madow** of Charlotte, N.C., and **Jeff Sobul** of Kansas City that analyzes the Beatles' psychedelic songs from 1966 to '68. That's fine, but too much of the text reads like pieced-together tidbits of information that already are extremely familiar to many fans.

There also is a lot of grand language that comes off like a

press release. When the authors write, "The Beatles shaped a generation and in doing so, affected the future of mankind," neither poetry nor scholarship seems to be achieved. Repeated references to "we" and "the book" point to a self-consciousness that only detracts from the subject — unless the real subject is the authors' appreciation of the Beatles music rather than the music itself.

Taken as a de facto glorification of a fruitful and influential phase of the Beatles' career, *The Colour of Your Dreams* is an opinionated light read that will disappoint those who expect more new information in a Beatles biography.

■ Qualifying as a surprising



**NIGHTHAWK**  
BRIAN MC TAVISH

hoot is Big Daddy's "Sgt. Pepper's," an affectionate track-by-track sendup of the Beatles' original. Big Daddy, an eight-man Los Angeles band that specializes in what it calls doo-wop 'n' roll, imbues 13 classic cuts with echoes of the past that musically entertain as they make you laugh.

The title song sounds like the Everly Brothers doing "Bird Dog." "A Little Help From My Friends" becomes Johnny Mathis crooning with what sounds like the Ray Conniff Singers in the background. "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" takes on a crazed Jerry Lee Lewis quality. "Fixing a Hole" smacks of Dion's "The Wanderer."

"Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite" points to Freddy Cannon's rollercoasting "Palisades Park," and George Harrison's "Within You, Without You" is hilariously transformed into word jazz with flute, triangle, bass and piano grooving beatnik style behind a hepcat, spoken-word vocal. Interestingly, Harrison's spiritual message may come through even more clearly in this humorous version than in the droning original.

The crown jewel is Big Daddy's mini-epic handling of "A Day in the Life," sung like a hiccuping Buddy Holly and ending with sound effects of the plane crash that killed him. Bad taste? Maybe. But a little rock 'n' roll sacrilege never hurt anybody, even the Beatles.

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR - 7/14/92**

(See other pages for additional Big Daddy album reviews)



## BIG DADDY: "SGT. PEPPERS" - Selected Album Reviews -

### CD Reviews

#### Big Daddy

Sgt. Peppers/Rhino Records

review by Sean English



"It was twenty years ago today..." Well actually more like twenty five years since the fab four released the album that changed the perception of what rock music is all about. **Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band** was to become the definitive album of the tumultuous 1960s. Having undergone rather drastic transformations due, in part, to mind-expanding drugs such as LSD and the barrage of intense experiences that come in the living legend package, **The Beatles** had left behind their innocent, double-breasted teen personas to become hippie, astral voyagers with a penchant for musical experimentation and a questioning of life's accepted norms.

The members of **Big Daddy** also question. Maybe their questions are not so monumental, but they are valid nonetheless. What if **The Beatles** hadn't indulged in the wares of the '60s? What if they followed their original musical path and continued to play '50s influenced 4/4 time rock n' roll?

In recording their **Sgt. Pepper's**, **Big Daddy** answers that which would have normally been a hypothetical question. The band that on past recordings has parodied such popular artists as **Madonna**, **Guns n' Roses** and **Ice-T**, with their own brassy, be-bop sound, now has tackled it's most formidable project to date. **Big Daddy** performs the whole **Sgt. Pepper's** album front to back (give or take a few notes) in the styles of various '50s rock n' roll artists. A stand out cut is the George Harrison penned *A day in*

*the Life* done in the style of the late, great Buddy Holly: *He blew his mind out in a car/ He didn't notice that the light had cha-ha-ha hanged!*. A departure from the dismal original, the song makes for a hilarious and subtle contradiction. Such clever humor permeates the disc and is really the heart of **Big Daddy's** music. Also hidden in the disc are traces of Jerry Lee Lewis (*Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*), Johnny Mathis (*With a Little Help From My Friends*), Dion (*Fixing A Hole*) and several others whom you won't even realize that you know until you hear them.

I'm not a huge **Beatles'** fan. I like them. I'm also not a huge fan of the '50s genre but the concept of **Big Daddy's Sgt. Pepper's**, and the flawless execution of the songs made it very pleasant to listen to. After listening to this disc I came away with a deeper appreciation of the '50s, of **The Beatles** and especially of **Big Daddy**

#### The Brasil Project

Toots Thielemans/Private Music (BMG)

review by Peter Beckman



It's one of those balmy LA autumns at the magic hour, the kind of day "that makes you remember

things that never happened." A warm breeze curls in, spiraling through your apartment. The sun hangs just above the horizon, the track lighting is at half mast. The evening's first dry martini waits on the side table near the CD player. Now is the perfect moment for... the samba.

So. Who's it to be? Luis Bonfá? Milton Nascimento or Gilberto Gil? Easily settled: they are all guests of master harmonicist Toots Thielemans on his newest album **The Brasil Project**, currently in release from Private Music.

Toots and company make the late LA summer a languid, joyous experience. It's the best example of Brazilian jazz since Getz first met Gilberto and Jobim. Be grateful. The beach at Rio is as near as your CD player



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# RECORDINGS

□  
**Big Daddy Sgt. Pepper's** (Rhino): The gag that these '50s-revival guys were locked away in a Laos jail cell for 30 years while rock evolved without them is wearing mighty thin.

And public demand for their Sha Na Na-meets-Weird Al Yancovic reworkings of songs like Dire Straits'

"Money For Nothing" and Springsteen's "Dancing In The Dark" would appear to be limited.

But they've really hit upon something this time, and just in time for the 25th anniversary of the release of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album.

The intent may be parody, but the result is an excellent and varied interpretation of a classic rock album. The Beat poetry reading of "Within You Without You" is hilarious; the Jerry Lee Lewis take of "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" is sublime; and I'll bet Paul Anka never thought of covering "She's Leaving Home".

Think of *Sgt. Pepper's* as a tribute album, and definitely add it to your collection — whether you're Beatle fan or not.

□

TORONTO STAR — CANADA, 6/92

(See other pages for additional Big Daddy album reviews)



**BIG DADDY: "SGT. PEPPERS"**  
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**ENTERTAINMENT MONDAY**



Big Daddy recast the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" LP in 1950s style.

# MUSIC MAKE-OVERS

BY GARY GRAFF  
Free Press Music Writer

**T**his year marks the 25th anniversary of the release of the Beatles' landmark album, "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band."

One could mark the occasion with serious discussion of the record's impact on popular culture, music-making and production techniques.

Or, one could doo-wop.

That's what Big Daddy did. Best known for setting contemporary hits to '50s arrangements — Vanilla Ice's "Ice, Ice Baby" to Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode," for instance — the eight-person Los Angeles band set out on an ambitious task. It recast the entire album in '50s style, tracking "Sgt.

## *Band puts '50s spin on modern tunes*

takeoffs on "A Day in the Life."

"One of the guys in the band came up with the idea a few years ago, actually," says Tom Lee, a Detroit native who moved to California in 1980 and cofounded Big Daddy in 1983. "We decided to do it all in the same order, the same sequence, even the same space between songs as the Beatles."

The result is a scream. The song treatments are ingenious, among them the schmoozy Johnny Mathis treatment of "With a Little Help from My Friends"; a Jerry Lee Lewis sendup of "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds"; "Fixing a Hole" a la Dion's "The Wander-

melody of James Darren's "Good-bye Cruel World."

"Doing 'When I'm Sixty Four' ala 'Sixty Minute Man' was the first idea we came up with; that just arranged itself," Lee, 40, says. "Something like that was a natural. Other times you've got to dig deep to find some of these styles to fit the songs. We just like to get working on an idea and see where it goes. We'll come close to the ballpark and then hit the home run later."

Lee — who does session singing and advertising voice-overs to supplement his Big Daddy income — says that so far there's been no reaction from the former Beatles, though they've all been sent albums.

In the meantime, the group is starting to work up material for its

**DETROIT FREE PRESS — 6/92**

(See other pages for additional Big Daddy album reviews)




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# SO URTEILT DIE PRESSE ÜBER DIESE SUPERGRUPPE:

POP-CD DES MONATS (HiFi Vision Nov. 92 -  
Platte des Monats)



**Big Daddy:  
Sgt. Pepper's** Rhino  
986.962,  
38'32" (IRS)

Ein Schock für Beatles-Puristen: Acht Herren mit Schmalztolle und Lederjacke machen sich daran, Stück für Stück die Pop-Ikone schlechthin, das unangreifbare Meisterwerk „Sergeant Pepper's“ ins Rock'n'Roll-Idiom der Fifties zu übersetzen. Völlig absurd, sollte man denken, doch der Scherz funktioniert. Oder ist es Ernst? Zuerst habe ich gestaunt, dann laut gelacht, und schließlich konnte ich kaum erwarten, wie denn wohl das nächste Stück klingen würde. Diese Vollblutmusiker beweisen sowohl traumhaft sichere Beherrschung ihrer Instrumente und Vokalsätze als auch eine profunde Kenntnis der frühen Popgeschichte. Immer wieder streuen Big Daddy Songzitate ein und experimentieren leichtfüßig mit sämtlichen Stil-Spielarten, so daß man schließlich glaubt, die Beatles-Songs seien ursprünglich genau so und nicht anders erdacht gewesen. „Good Morning Good Morning“ als A-cappella-Doo-Wop, „Within You Without You“ in einer Buddy-Holly-Version – alles erscheint logisch und stimmig, und wer mag, kann nachforschen, welches Rock'n'Roll-Original für welchen Song jeweils Pate stand. „A real neat time is guaranteed for all“ steht auf der Plattenhülle. Stimmt. Einziger Nachteil meiner derzeitigen Lieblingsplatte ist ihre kurze Laufzeit. Tom Petersen

**Musik: 1** **Klang: 2**

- Original review in German...see next page for English Translation -

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**Pop-CD of the Month (Hifi Vision Nov., '92)**

**THIS IS THE JUDGEMENT OF THIS SUPER GROUP:**

**Big Daddy: Sgt. Pepper's**

A shock for Beatles-purists: 8 men with grease and leather jackets call attention to themselves, piece for piece this pop icon couldn't touch this unapproachable masterwork, "Seargeant Pepper's" - to translate into the idiom of the 1950's is completely absurd - one would think; however, the jest works. Or is this serious? At first I was astonished, then laughed a lot and at last could hardly wait to hear how the next piece would sound. This hardy music, almost dreamlike exhibits proof of control over their instruments and vocal lines as well as a profound knowledge of early pop history. Continually, Big Daddy song citation's experiment with light and presence; show their proficiency in playing so that in the end you believe that the Beatle's songs were originally so and were never conceived of being done in any other way. "Good Morning Good Morning", an acappella-doo-wop, "Within You Without You" in a Buddy-Holly-version - all seems logical and lively and whoever wants to can research which rock-n-roll is original for which song. "A real neat time is guaranteed for all" on the LP. Surely, a drawback is the LP's running time.

Tom Peterson

**HIFI VISION MAGAZINE – GERMANY, 11/92**

(See other pages for additional Big Daddy album reviews)